

BRIEFS

IRELAND OKs ABORTION IN MAY 25 REFERENDUM

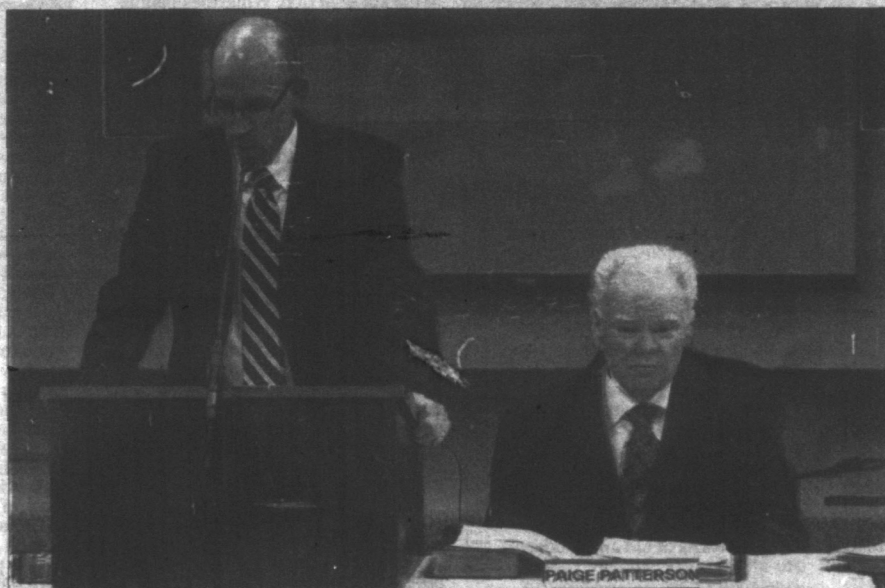
IRELAND (BP) — Irish voters on May 25 voted overwhelmingly to permit abortion nationwide, Ireland's Eighth Amendment, adopted in 1983, makes a mother and her unborn baby equal under the law, effectively restricting abortion except in cases where the mother's life is at risk. The Irish government supported the repeal effort, proposing legal abortion during the first 12 weeks of pregnancy. Analysts have portrayed the vote as the last stand in the battle for the country's soul. The once strictly Roman Catholic country voted to allow same sex marriage three years ago, and elected a homosexual prime minister last year.

BIBLE RANKS LOW AS A 'DAILY NECESSITY'

NASHVILLE (BP) — The Bible tops coffee, social media, and sweets as a daily necessity for only 16% of the population, according to new research commissioned by the American Bible Society (ABS). The largest segment of Americans, 37%, see coffee as a top essential. Dessert was tops for 28%, and 19% chose social media. Fifty-eight percent said they wished they read the Bible more often. "The Bible provides the wisdom of the ages for today's fears, challenges, and struggles," ABS president and CEO Roy Peterson said. "We are finding the more engaged with the Bible someone is, the more hopeful and peaceful they are."

CA. BATTLE CONTINUES OVER ASSISTED SUICIDE

RIVERSIDE, Ca. (BP) — Daniel Ottilia, a Superior Court judge in Riverside County, California, has struck down the state's End of Life Option Act legalizing assisted suicide, saying legislators defied California law by passing the measure during a special session called to address health care issues, according to the Los Angeles Times. Ottilia provided the state attorney general five days to appeal the ruling and keep the law in effect.



PRESIDENT NO MORE — Paige Patterson (right), removed May 22 from his job as president of Southwestern Seminary in Ft. Worth, listens as Kevin Ueckert, Southwestern trustee chairman, addresses trustees at the special called meeting that day and brought on by public comments Patterson made regarding women and domestic violence, as well as vulgar references about the body of a teenaged girl. (Photo courtesy of Southwestern Seminary)

Southwestern dismisses president School trustees appoint Patterson pres. emeritus

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP and local reports) — In a meeting that began May 22 at 1:30 p.m. and ended just after 3 a.m. on May 23, Southwestern Seminary trustees debated the fate of

embattled Southwestern Seminary President Paige Patterson for remarks that surfaced about women, domestic violence, and the body of a teenaged girl.

Patterson was ultimately dismissed from his leadership

see PATTERSON on p. 10

SBC drops District of Columbia Conv.

NASHVILLE (BP) — After nearly a year and a half of discussions concerning a Washington church with lesbian co-pastors, the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) has notified the District of Columbia Baptist Convention (DCBC) that "the formal relationship between the SBC and the DCBC has come to an end," according to a statement by SBC Executive Committee interim president D. August Boto in Nashville.

At its Feb. 19-20 meeting in Nashville, the Executive Committee adopted a recommendation granting DCBC 90 days to "secure" the removal of any churches from its fellowship that have demonstrated a faith or practice affirming, approving or endorsing homosexual behavior.

If such churches remained

in friendly cooperation with the DCBC after May 20, the Executive Committee stated, the DCBC would lose its authorization "to receive and disburse Cooperative Program and other SBC contributions."

At issue was Calvary Church in Washington, which cooperates with the DCBC and voted in January 2017 to call a legally-married lesbian couple as co-pastors. Calvary voted in 2012 to cease cooperation with the SBC.

Boto told Baptist Press he received a letter May 21 from DCBC executive director Robert Cochran "indicating that the DCBC has not taken action the Executive Committee hoped it would when it issued its Feb. 20 decision. In his letter, Cochran divulged that he anticipated an end to our relationship."

Boto added, "I issued a letter [May 21], to the DCBC on behalf of the EC, and copying it to all EC members. I will soon send another letter to each of eight churches we know of in DC that are supporting SBC work through financial gifts directed through the DCBC."

The letters will inform each group that the formal relationship between the SBC and the DCBC has come to an end and that, beginning [May 21], the SBC no longer recognizes the District of Columbia Baptist Convention as a Baptist body authorized to receive and disburse Cooperative Program and other SBC contributions.

Cochran contacted Boto in early April, inviting Executive

see SBC on p. 9

Graham's will urges family to keep faith

NASHVILLE (BP) — When Billy Graham died at age 99 in his North Carolina home on February 21, he left behind a legacy of service to his Lord through preaching the Gospel — but according to his will, recently made public, that's not all there is to his legacy.

The 16-page document begins with a charge to his family members who remain. "I ask my children and grandchildren to maintain and defend at all hazards and at any cost of personal sacrifice the blessed doctrine of complete atonement through the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ once offered, and through that alone," he wrote.

"I urge all of you to walk with the Lord in a life of separation from the world and to keep eternal values in view."

As a comfort to his family, he wrote: "When you read this I will be safely with Jesus in Paradise. I will be awaiting the reunion of our family in Heaven."

Throughout the next section of the will, Graham chronicled the major points of his life — non-material blessings, such as his simple childhood on a Charlotte, N.C., dairy farm,

see GRAHAM on p. 9

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From the editor

WILLIAM PERKINS

The unworthy among us

A young, unmarried graduate student found herself pregnant and without support. She chose life and gave birth to a son, who was adopted by the Jobs family and named Steven. Steve Jobs, of Apple, Inc., fame, went on to literally change the world, several times over.

When he was born, his single mother wasn't exactly sure who the father was, so she left that box blank on his birth certificate and simply made up a last name for the boy. He never met his father, but grew up to define a generation of actors and win Academy Awards for best actor and lifetime achievement. He inspired millions of young people around the world in one of his last movie roles. We know him as Colonel Nicholson in *The Bridge on the River Kwai*, and as Obi-Wan Kenobi in *Star Wars*: Alec Guinness.

He was born to a slave girl, and rumored to be the son of her master. He was separated from his mother in infancy when she was sold. He never even knew the year of his birth. As a young man, he pushed himself to learn to read and write. He was beaten when he was caught teaching other slaves to read during a Sunday School class, using the New Testament as his text. After he escaped and lived as a free man, he captivated Northern society with the oratory and passion that fueled his tireless abolitionist campaign. He lived to see the slaves freed, and statues in honor of Frederick Douglass now stand in Central Park in New York City and in the county of his birth in Maryland.

When she was born, her royal father rejected her and had her mother executed. She was subsequently declared illegitimate to remove her as his heir. She was betrayed and imprisoned by her sister. The trauma of her early life likely influenced her decision never to marry, but she finally succeeded to the throne of England and supported the first Protestant churches in that country. From the progeny of those early churches came some of the most successful missionary

efforts in Christian history. The 44-year reign of Queen Elizabeth I brought new prosperity to her country, and forced the rest of the world to acknowledge England as a superpower.

Steve Jobs, Alec Guinness, Frederick Douglass, Queen Elizabeth I. Like many of the people around us, they were brought into this world under less than ideal circumstances and — in our oh-so-enlightened modern society — would all be candidates for death by abortion before they ever had a chance to live. Abortion must end.

These four people, and many others like them, were at birth what the Nazis of old and modern pro-abortionists consider *Lebensunwertes Leben*, or "Not worthy of life," a phrase coined by the Nazis to justify their mass exterminations. An unborn baby in America today who is conceived poor, or out of wedlock, or disabled, or a member of an out-of-favor ethnic group — defenseless people, in other words — can be exterminated without a second thought, just like people of Nazi Germany. Abortion must end.

The difference is how we modern Americans have sanitized the concept. We don't have wild edicts from a madman dictator; we have staid Supreme Court rulings. We don't build gas chambers; we build "clinics." We don't use crematoriums that rain ashes down on us; we use garbage disposals that chop up and whisk the little bodies into a sewer system. Abortion must end.

It is the shame of America and a stain in the nostrils of Almighty God. Abortion must end. Don't be confused by those who would try to panic us with false or misleading information, especially from baby-killing outsiders who believe Mississippians are too dumb to make such a momentous decision on their own. Abortion must end.

Get the facts to get an understanding of what is at stake. Babies "not worthy of life" are being exterminated every week in Mississippi. Perhaps among them is the next Jobs, Guinness, Douglass, or Elizabeth I. Abortion must end.

God has a place for everyone.

A Five-Dollar Rebuttal

In the May 10 edition of *The Baptist Record*, Dr. Kenny Digby of the Christian Action Commission (CAC) penned an article entitled, *A Five-Dollar Word*, in which he stated his opposition to the doctrine of limited atonement.

The article began with strength, recounting his recent trip to the MLK50 conference, followed by his condemnation of racism citing all of humanity to be created in the image of God. While the opening two paragraphs began with the denunciation of racism, something that Mississippi Baptists should employ more often, the article then took an unnecessary turn.

While I respect Dr. Digby for his work with the Christian Action Commission, he had a tremendous opportunity to promote unity by pointing to the reality that all ethnicities have been created in the image of God, to which I believe he squandered it by furthering division through the age-old debate of unlimited vs. limited atonement.

This particular argument, often referred to as Calvinism vs. Non-Calvinism, has done nothing but plague the Southern Baptist Convention for decades. It is perplexing as to why Dr. Digby felt the need to insert himself into a theological debate under the heading of the Christian Action Commission, when the CAC is not designed to weigh in on such topics, only to serve as a "mediator between our churches and our elected officials" (Dr. Digby's words in his address at the MS Baptist Convention).

With this being the case, his comments regarding limited atonement and its proponents are out of place given his position at the CAC. Had he wanted to air out his theological positions, it might have been more suitable to take out a personal ad, being that many Cooperative Program givers adhere to limited atonement.

Furthermore, he made some jarring claims regarding this specific doctrine. He noted that the doctrine is "even more damaging to the Kingdom" than racism. It is perplexing that a belief that heralds, "repent of your sin and turn to Christ" would be more damaging than a doctrine that attacks the very heart of the *imago Dei*.

I wonder how some of my fellow African American Mississippi Baptists who adhere to the doctrine of limited atonement would interpret Dr. Digby's remarks? Is their belief more damaging to the King-



Guest opinion
with Andy Baker

dom of God than the racism that enslaved their ancestors for so many years? This doctrine announces, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."

To insinuate that limited atonement is more dangerous than racism does not unify Mississippi Baptists, but divides.

We have a rich Baptist history full of champions for Christ who held to the doctrine of limited atonement. When hearing the idea that this doctrine is more dangerous to the Kingdom than racism, I cannot help but ponder how some of our Baptist ancestors would interpret these remarks.

How would the Prince of Preachers, Charles Spurgeon, also a believer in the doctrine of limited atonement, respond? I wonder how William Carey, the father of modern day missions and a Calvinist, would interpret these remarks?

It is interesting to note that these two men, of which have led numerous people to Christ, both adhere to the doctrine of limited atonement.

The point is this: whether you land with limited or unlimited atonement should not prevent Baptist partnership. What matters is Mississippi Baptists learning to work together in a spirit of unity and a bond of peace.

Both unlimited and limited doctrines call people to repent of their sin and trust in Christ, magnifying the saving grace of our great God. With this being the case, regardless of how we understand the outworking of soteriology behind the veil, can we not put this debate to rest and continue the work of ministry in this state and across the globe? I think we can.

Baker is pastor of First Church Oloh in Sumrall.

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VBS brings good memories, good attendance

NASHVILLE (BP) — Back in the 1890s, a pair of Sunday School teachers had the same idea: School kids were off for the summer, so why not invite them to church to study the Bible and maybe sing a few songs and have some fun along the way? The idea was a hit.

Today, the brainchild of D.T. Miles of Hopedale, Ill., and Virginia Hawes of New York City is known as Vacation Bible School (VBS) and remains one of the most popular church programs in America.

Six in 10 Americans say they went to VBS while growing up. Two-thirds of American parents say they plan to send their kids to VBS this summer even if they skip church themselves.

Almost everyone involved had a positive experience, according to a new survey from Nashville-based LifeWay Research, which surveyed 1,200 American adults about VBS.

"Each week of the summer there are thousands of VBS programs going on around America," said Scott McConnell, executive director of LifeWay Research. "It's one of the things that people love about church."

VBS memories

Twenty-two percent say they went every summer while growing up, while 14% said they went most summers. Another 13% went occasionally. Five percent went more than once and 40% never went.

Many went because of a family tie. Forty-two percent say they went because their family attended that church.

Twenty-five percent went because their parent or another family member was one of the leaders.

Twenty-six percent went because the church was near their home.

Twenty-five percent went because a friend invited them.

Among their memories: spending time with kids their own age (46%), learning Bible stories (45%), singing songs (40%), creating crafts (37%) and playing games (34%).

One in six remember making a spiritual commitment at VBS.

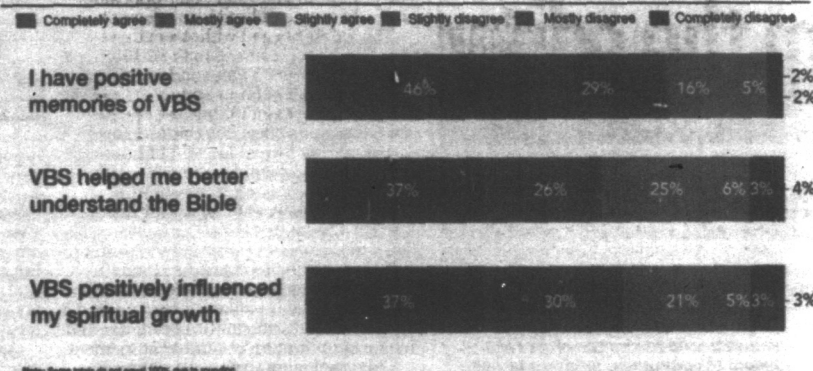
Most (88%) say VBS helped them better understand the Bible. That includes those who either completely agree (37%) or mostly agree (26%). Twelve percent disagree.

Americans who didn't go to VBS as a child also didn't go to church at all (31%) or went to a church that did not offer VBS (31%), were too busy (10%), weren't invited (seven percent) or didn't go for some other reason (15%).

Five percent say their family went to a church that offered VBS but they weren't interested in going.

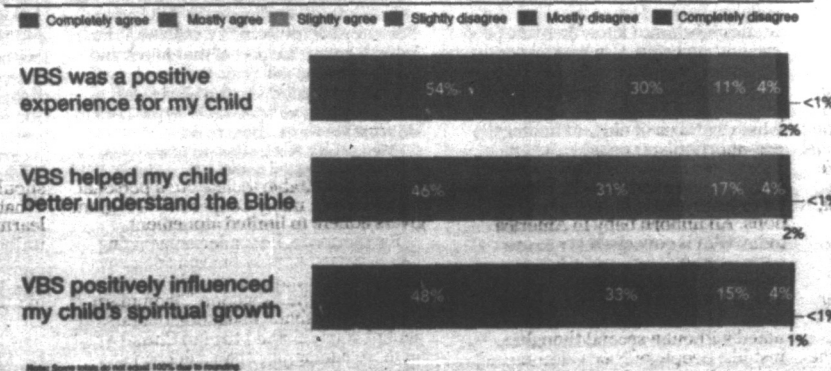
Remembering Vacation Bible School

Among American adults who attended VBS



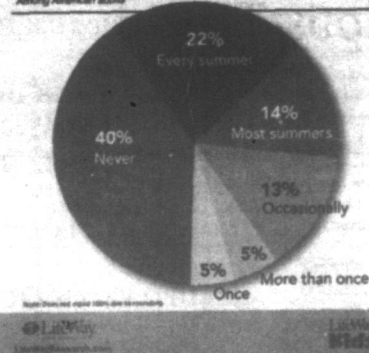
Parents' feelings about Vacation Bible School

Among American adults whose child (under 19) attended VBS



Most Americans recall attending VBS growing up

Among American adults



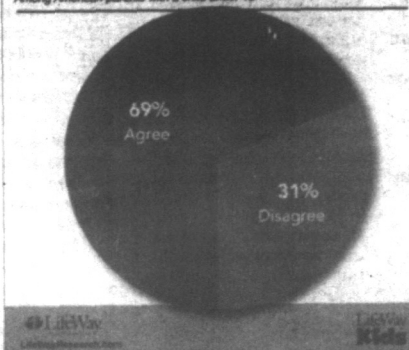
Sixty-seven percent of American adults who did not go to VBS agree they have some positive thoughts about the program. That includes 28% who completely agree or mostly agree (14%). Thirty-three percent

slightly agree. Thirty-nine percent disagree.

A majority of Americans (57%) who did not go to VBS also believe the program could have helped them better understand the Bible — at least a little. Forty-

Most parents would let their child attend VBS at someone else's church if invited

Among American parents with a child under 19



three percent disagree.

Fifty-two percent agree the program could have impacted their spiritual growth. Forty-eight percent disagree.

The survey's results are a great reminder why VBS matters, said

Jana Magruder, director of LifeWay Kids.

"It's a strong affirmation of the work that churches put into VBS programs," Magruder said. "I hope churches are encouraged by this research to continue to host VBS for their communities."

Parent popularity

Forty-seven percent of parents with kids under 19 say their child has been to VBS.

The most common reasons: The family attended the church where the program was held (38%) or the parents were also taking part in VBS (33%). Twenty-nine percent say they valued their child's spiritual growth; 27% valued studying the Bible.

A fourth say their child went to VBS because someone other than family invited them.

Most parents (95%) say VBS was a positive experience for their child. A similar number say VBS helped their child better understand the Bible (94%) and influenced their child's spiritual growth (95%).

Ninety-five percent also say that VBS is one of their child's most meaningful church experiences.

Among the reasons parents didn't send kids to VBS: The family didn't go to church (29%), the family was too busy (14%) or the child was too busy (13%).

Still, parents who didn't send their kids to VBS have a positive view of the program (83%) and say it would have helped their child better understand the Bible (69%) or grow spiritually (71%).

This summer, Vacation Bible Schools may be packed again, according to LifeWay Research. Sixty-four percent say their child is likely to go to VBS this year, including 29% who completely agree or mostly agree (18%).

Third-six percent disagree. Fifty-eight percent say their child may go to more than one VBS. Forty-two percent disagree.

Most parents (60%) say they'll encourage their kids to attend VBS even if it's held at someone else's church. More parents will encourage their child to attend VBS at another church if they get invited by a friend (69%).

"Two-thirds of American parents are eager to send their children to a church activity where they will have fun experiences centered on what churches care about most: Bible stories, the Gospel and worship," Magruder noted.

"People still believe Vacation Bible School is good for kids," McConnell said. "Even parents who don't go to church want their kids to go to VBS."

LifeWay Research is a Nashville-based, evangelical research firm that specializes in surveys about faith in culture and matters that affect churches.

On any given week, there are usually several hundred churches across our state looking for a new pastor and additional staff members. Their pastor left or a staff member went to a new position, and the church probably has elected a search committee and given them the responsibility of going hither and yon, to and fro, to find just the right person to come and be their pastor. It is a huge responsibility and one that has been fascinating to watch all across my days in the ministry, but it goes far beyond that.

There is a large search firm that advertises on television and radio and through all kinds of media. The ads present the possibilities that they can find just the right person for almost any need that any business or profession would have. In recent ads, it caught my attention because one of the things they say, sometimes numerous, is you can say "goodbye to post and pray." What they are referring to is the practice of posting a need for a particular person, a particular skill, a particular area of work, and they will bring folks to your attention that would be available. The posting of the need is then joined by praying that someone will respond to it.

This search firm, and it is just one of many, has a database through which they can cull to find just the right person whether it is an engineer or a janitor or teacher or technician. Just let them know what you need and they will get you the qualified candidates. All of this is made possible because of our computers and the World Wide Web, but now there are a number of search firms that are focused just on ministry and especially the pastoralate. They can find who you need and help determine what it is you want and what your people think is right. They can package it together, find the person who would be interested, and all will be well in the Kingdom of God.

This mindset has increasingly come into the church, so much so that people actually think that you can post the need and the right person will pop up on the screen. Maybe you just need to Google them and find the size, person, age, and description of the next pastor, and his face will appear.



In Search of a New Pastor

pear. You can find the perfect candidate or maybe even several right candidates and never leave the comfort of your computer screen and your mouse in hand. You can even click to hear him preach or see a picture of his beautiful family or get high profile references or read his strengths and weaknesses. Even Christians, who know the Lord and want to follow His guidance, have come to say like the other search firm, "goodbye to post and pray."

Hold on just a minute. I would like to interject that this may not be the wisest and best approach for the people of God to always follow. I know the computer is an amazing thing. I know there are people who find connections in business or maybe in their love life and maybe you can even make connections with possibilities of people who could come and help lead your church, but there is more to finding the leaders in God's church than just flipping through resumes on a computer screen. Let me just share a few thoughts with you.

■ **Never lose sight of the fact that Jesus is the Lord of the church, and as Lord of the church He knows His servants and He knows how to guide a committee to them.** He knows where they are, and He knows where the committee is. I know God uses human instrumentality, but do not lose sight of the fact that God is at work both in the committee

in their search to find the right person and for the right person to be available to God to be used.

I read in Scripture in Revelation 1:16 and 19 that Jesus holds the stars in His hand. It's talking about the seven stars that will be in the seven churches that you will see in chapter two and three. He reveals that they are the seven angels or messengers or it appears what we call pastors are the ones in His hand. He guides them, uses them, corrects them, blesses them. I am of the opinion that God still works through pastoral leadership and through committees that will seek God's leading to the right pastor. For everyone involved, it requires spiritual investment on the part of the church and the people who will pray. People who will seek and consider who the Lord wants to have and have an open heart to the Lord to do what He wants them to do.

We can get His leaders in place when we get in our place before Him. Listen, the Lord knows where folks are. I think about Saul being anointed as king of Israel and when Samuel found him, he was out chasing donkeys for his dad. The Lord knew where he was and what he was doing. He knew how to bring about a relationship. Peter and James and John were down by the seaside fishing when Jesus found them. He knew where they were, redirected their lives, and they became Kingdom leaders.

Isaiah was grieving over the death of King Uzziah when the encounter came and God called him, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?" "Here am I," Isaiah said (Isa. 6:8).

■ **Jesus leads His church. He is the Lord of the church, and He leads us.** Often when a church is looking for a pastor, both the committee and the church will focus on the search effort and the kind of person they think they need or want. There are times when more than the need to get the pastor, the church needs to get themselves together. Oftentimes our churches go looking for the right guy to come and guide them but have not at all thought about or considered the things that they need to do before finding him.

■ **Jesus longs for His church and all of His people to be a part of a redeemed, caring fellowship carrying out the mission for Him to reach a world for Christ.** He is at work in the search. He is at work in the pastor who needs to come and serve. He is at work to bring them together, but then He is at work longing for them to be the community of faith reaching out and caring for those who need a Savior, for those who need a fellowship where they can find hope and healing, longing for them to come together and be His people. That will take place when we come together under Him in an atmosphere of amazing love.

Peter writes in his little book of 1 Peter 4:8, "And above all things have fervent love one for another." Then he adds in that verse, "For love will cover a multitude of sins." As we move forward to do what God wants us to do, a church and a new pastor need to be immersed and remain in the love atmosphere of Jesus, one toward another and toward Him. So often, the smallest things throw us off kilter and we lose the warmth of our relationship. In some churches, three or six months into the relationship we think we need a new pastor because we got the wrong one this time. Well, love him and be loved by him. Love covers a multitude of sins.

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College News



John Travis has been named Distinguished Professor of the Year at **MISSISSIPPI COLLEGE**. He is chairman of the Mississippi College math department. An MC graduate, Travis earned his master's degree at the University of Tennessee and his doctorate at Mississippi State University.



WILLIAM CAREY UNIVERSITY'S Omicron Delta Kappa Society inducted 14 new members on April 27. This national honor society recognizes leadership in five areas: scholarship; athletics; campus or community service; social and religious activities and campus government; journalism speech and mass media; and creative and performing arts. Shown (front, from left), are Mary-Gautreaux of Baton Rouge, La.; Alexandra Green of Brandon; Neetu Regmi of Nepal; Amy Pouncey of Mobile, Ala.; and Katie Woods of Pensacola, Fla.; (second row) DeAnna Ellis of Ellisville, Ashlyn Stringfellow of Lucedale, Ian Pittman of Columbia and Pao Villegas of Mexico City, Mexico; (third row) Pankaj Bhatta of Nepal, Joshua Pitts of Ellisville, Caleb Golson of Hattiesburg and Drew English of Hattiesburg. They are pictured with faculty sponsor Dr. Jay Richardson, assistant professor of history. Not pictured is Amia Catherine Green of Jackson.

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ONW UB VGOLCZPI IU TZ EGPRXMZO.
XZAUPU EZIZH IJU: PRPZ

Clue: M = H

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: 1 John 5:2

By Charles Marx. 1932-2004, © 2005



NAME CHANGE? — A study team commissioned by the Southern Baptist Conference of Associational Leaders discussed its findings at a March 1 meeting in Atlanta. One of the study team's recommendations will be a title change for directors of missions. (BP photo)

Missions director study team issues report on title change

DALLAS (BP) — Baptist association's DOM (director of missions) soon could be the AMS (associational mission strategist) if the association takes the title-change recommendation of a report to be presented next month at a gathering of associational leaders.

A 12-member study team commissioned at the 2017 Southern Baptist Conference of Associational Leaders (SBCAL) meeting in Phoenix surveyed more than 400 Southern Baptists online about their views of associations, interviewed leaders of about two dozen effective associations, and wrote a report on the title and role of associational leaders — often known as DOMs.

The report, released May 15, will be presented at SBCAL's June 10-11 meeting in Dallas in conjunction with the Southern Baptist Convention's June 12-13 meeting there. SBCAL meeting attendees will consider a motion to adopt the report, though its recommendations are not binding for the more than 1,100 autonomous associations in Southern Baptist life.

"It's important for us to get it right as Southern Baptists at the local level," study team leader Rick Wheeler told Baptist Press. "If we ever intend to be effective at the national and international level in collaborative mission work, we cannot be nationally and internationally who we are not being locally."

The study team, comprised of associational leaders, state convention leaders, a pastor,

and a representative of the SBC Executive Committee staff hopes its report will catalyze "some renewal of appreciation and focus on Baptist work at the local level," said Wheeler, lead missional strategist for the Jacksonville (Fla.) Association.

After explaining the team's research process, the 17-page report outlines 17 "leader proficiencies" deemed important for associational leaders in the 21st century. The proficiencies, Wheeler said, are "the most important thing" in the report.

"Foundational proficiencies" for associational leaders include personal character and a calling to associational leadership, according to the report. "Relational proficiencies" include emotional intelligence and the ability to be a "supportive coach" for churches and pastors.

"Strategic proficiencies" include the ability to cast vision and train future associational leaders.

The study team developed their recommended title change for associational leaders, Wheeler said, in light of the proficiencies necessary for the position.

The title director of missions accurately described the work of associational leaders during a previous era of SBC life "when all of the various levels of the denomination tended to work like cogs in a wheel. There were structured programs that connected our work" and needed directing on a local level, said Wheeler, a member of the SBC Executive Committee.

"To a great degree," such coordinated programs "no longer exist," he said. The recommended title associational mission strategist is not an attempt "to move away from something," but to "address how it is working now and what would be the way to describe the way it's working now."

According to the report, some associations may want to refer to their leaders as simply "mission strategists." For associations with multiple staff in the office, "lead mission strategist" may be an appropriate title for the primary leader.

The report concludes by recommending that Southern Baptists establish a "professional development process" for associational leaders, plan more extensively for leadership succession within associations, maintain SBCAL as "a strong voice for associational missions," and engage in more effective associational mission work.

According to the report, "The relevance of local associations is not just a thing of the past, but is the current way most SBC churches are partnering with sister churches to engage their local mission field. By God's grace we see a bright future of thriving local associations served by proficient leaders comprised of churches united by their faith and surrendered to Jesus Christ and His mission in the world."

The full report is available at <http://www.sbcassociations.org/report.html>.

Faith puts critically injured high school player back in game

BROWNSVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — High school senior Landon Wilson wrote as his farewell quote in the yearbook, "Like I have always said, four years at Haywood High School will cost me an arm and a leg."

Classmates told Wilson it was the funniest senior quote in the yearbook of the high school in Brownsville, Tenn.

Humor, faith, family, friends and baseball have helped Wilson not only cope with the loss of his left arm but remain positive.

While running 200 yards from his home in Brownsville last Oct. 26, a pickup truck pulling a lawn mower trailer hit him from behind. His left arm was barely hanging, and his broken right leg was in danger of being lost, too.

Wilson also had a broken ankle, broken feet, broken knee, and broken toes. He would spend the next 45 days at Regional One Medical Center in Memphis.

Eight surgeries included amputation of his left arm. Two titanium rods were inserted into his right leg, a plate and three screws in his left ankle, two screws in his right knee, three screws in his right foot.

Four of the surgeries were to clean out grass, glass, and gravel.

"If you go through one of these accidents, you have to have a sense of humor or else you probably wouldn't be able to get through it," he said.

A right-handed pitcher on the Tomcats' baseball team, Wilson's faith has grown.

"I never thought my life would be that drastically changed in one day but obviously it was and I feel like it has made me a better person," said Wilson, a member of Brownsville Baptist Church and the son of Taylor and Beth Wilson. "The accident brought me closer to God and it opened my eyes in so many ways and brought a perspective of life."

"God is always there for me," he noted. "He is my shepherd. He guides me through life. I want to follow His plan."

Amazingly, Wilson has returned to action, and made his senior-year debut on the mound against Lake County on March 15. He called it a "dream come true."

"I spent all that time in the hospital working to get back on the mound," Wilson said. "It was amazing."

This season, he has a 2-0 record with a 3.93 ERA, and has recorded 14 strikeouts in 10 2-3 innings. His fastball is 75 mph.

"He has exceeded all my



Landon Wilson

expectations," said Haywood head coach Tyler Newman. "Landon has a very strong faith. This is pretty much [what] they have based his whole recovery on. Things could have been a lot worse but they put their faith in Him and He has helped him heal to the point that he has. It has been pretty miraculous to see him pitching already."

Wilson, 18, wants to be vocal with his story and use it as an inspiration for others.

"With my story, I feel like this is the way He has shown me this is a good thing and positive can come out of it. There are many opportunities that can come from this," he said. "I feel like I have affected more people by this happening than I ever would have. I want to touch as many people as I can with my story and get as many people to follow Christ as I can."

Wilson, who made a commitment while attending VBS as a young boy, realized in the hospital that there would be adjustments and he would have to do things differently. Playing baseball again was among his goals.

While there are baseball players with one arm, most were born that way. Landon had to adapt in weeks to throw again this season.

"It has been pretty miraculous to see him pitching already," Newman said.

Teammate Tillman McRae, a right-handed pitcher and shortstop, said Wilson's encouragement gives the team hope.

"He boosts everybody up," said McRae, who attends Holly Grove Baptist Church and has been friends with Wilson since preschool. "Seeing him on the mound again makes everybody want to play hard."

Just for the Record



Joyful Noise, **FIRST CHURCH, FLORA**, visited and sang at Compere's Nursing Home in Jackson.



DUCK HILL CHURCH, DUCK HILL, held a baby dedication May 14.



FIRST CHURCH, LAMBERT, held a lifetime deacon recognition service for four of their deacons: Gene Faust, Buck Fortner, Paul Hastings, and Thomas Williams. Shown are Hastings, Mavis Faust, Fortner, and Williams.



HICKORY GROVE CHURCH, LAMAR, recognized high school and kindergarten graduates May 6. Shown are Karlee Harrell, Colton Bjorgaard, Lillie Broom, Ariana Mauldin, and Jalyn Utley.



FARMHAVEN CHURCH, FARMHAVEN, honored Pisgah High School graduate Hunter Jenkins (front, second from left) May 13.



MACEDONIA CHURCH, MENDENHALL, held its 2018 senior recognition May 6.



UNITY CHURCH, LEAKESVILLE, hosted a Super Senior Adult Sunday May 6. Walter Mixon, pastor.



FIRST CHURCH, MYRICK, honored its 2018 graduates with a Bible. Shown are Leah Bankston, Erin Walters, Eric Carson, and Zach English. Craig Walters, student pastor; Rory M. Dill, pastor.



GRAPE CREEK CHURCH, CHOCTAW COUNTY, held a baby dedication. Shown are Crystal and Michael Ray with daughter Kambrie, and Ahna and Chris Mooney with son Cross.



BEULAH CHURCH, DECATUR, honored their 2018 high school graduates May 20. Shown are James Fayette, Dalton Fayette, Grace Myers, Jessi Thaggard, and Eli Harrison.

Just for the Record



BASSFIELD CHURCH, BASSFIELD, recognized all mothers on Mother's Day with children giving each mother a small gift.



James Buie, chalk artist, shared at **GRACE CHURCH, VICKSBURG**. Shown are WMU members, Buie, and pastor Bryan and Mary Lee Abel.



ROBINWOOD CHURCH, SAUCIER, recognized its 2018 high school and college graduates.



SPRING HILL CHURCH, WATERFORD, recently hosted a senior ladies' brunch. Amy Presley, speaker.

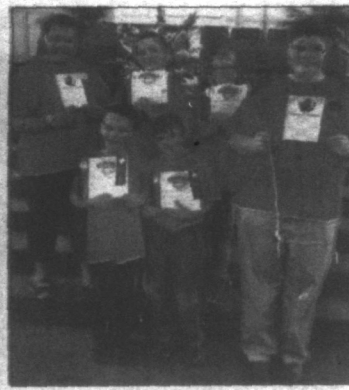
Bible Drills



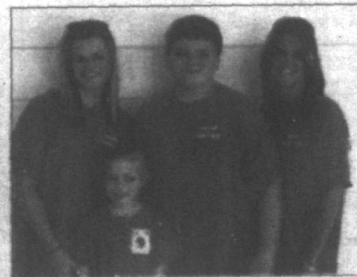
FIRST CHURCH, TUPELO, recognizes its children's drillers and student drillers. Matt Powell, pastor.



FIRST CHURCH, MORTON, recognizes its drillers that participated in the Association and State drills.



LUDLOW CHURCH, LUDLOW, recognizes its student drillers.



LAUREL HILL CHURCH, NESHOTA COUNTY ASSOCIATION, recognizes its drillers and leaders: back, Abby Winstead, Luke Winstead, and Sam Winstead; Sloane Blackstock, front.



BEULAH CHURCH, DECATUR, recognizes its 2018 drillers.

Watchdog commission condemns increasing religious mistreatment

WASHINGTON (BP and local reports) — Twenty years after the U.S. Congress passed and U.S. President Bill Clinton signed the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998, many countries are increasingly denying such freedoms, a federal watchdog commission is reporting.

The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) noted the dichotomy in releasing its 2018 Annual Report on 2017 religious freedom violations in 28 countries.

"Sadly, religious freedom conditions deteriorated in many countries in 2017, often due to increasing authoritarianism or under the guise of countering terrorism," USCIRF Chairman Daniel Mark said in releasing the report.

"Yet there is also reason for optimism 20 years after the passage of the International Religious Freedom Act," said Mark, assistant professor of political science at Villanova University in Villanova, Pa. "The importance of this foundational right is appreciated more now than ever, and egregious violations are less likely to go unnoticed."

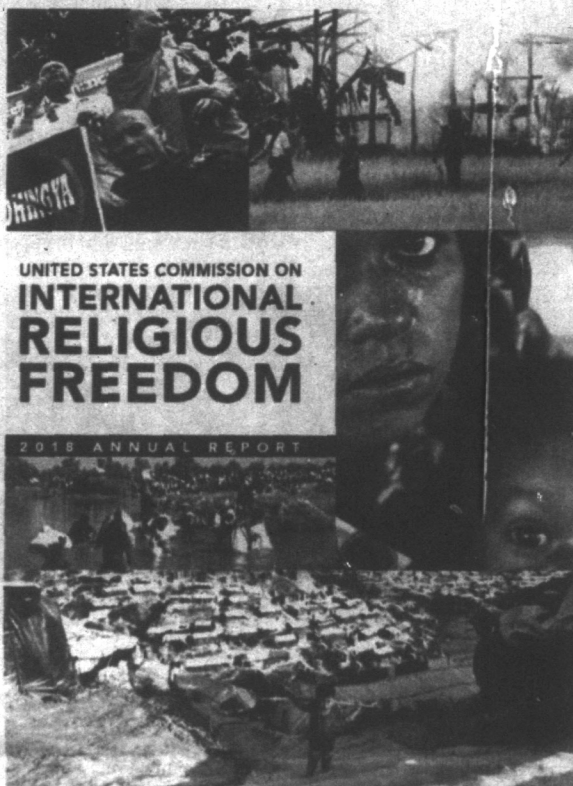
October will mark the 20th anniversary of the International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA) which has never been fully implemented, USCIRF said, but was strengthened in 2016 by the Frank R. Wolf International Religious Freedom Act (Frank Wolf Act) to address implementation concerns.

Wolf, a Republican U.S. Congressman from Virginia, introduced the original bill in the U.S. House of Representatives in 1998. U.S. Senator Arlen Specter of Pennsylvania introduced the original bill on the other end of the U.S. Capitol in the U.S. Senate.

USCIRF's report encouraged the Trump administration to fully implement IRFA and related laws to speed and protect international religious freedom.

"In its second year, the Trump Administration should build on stated commitments to elevate religious freedom as a priority in our foreign policy and national security strategy by vigorously implementing IRFA, the Frank Wolf Act, and the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act [of 2016] to pressure egregious violators," Mark said.

"USCIRF also urges the administration to prioritize seeking the release of religious prisoners of conscience abroad, and to work closely with international partners in efforts to promote freedom of religion or belief for all," Mark added.



UNITED STATES COMMISSION ON INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

2018 ANNUAL REPORT

USCIRF annually recommends countries of particular concern (CPCs), or Tier 1 countries, based on "systemic, ongoing, egregious" violations, as well as a Tier 2 "watch list" of countries that meet one or two of the criteria for CPCs.

Since the Frank Wolf Act, Congress also has recommended entities of particular concern, EPCs, for non-state violators such as terrorist groups.

Genocide, killings, slavery, rape, imprisonment, forced displacement, and forced conversions were among the most severe abuses reported in addition to childhood religious education bans, female marginalization, intimidation, harassment, and property destruction.

"In addition to endangering individuals and communities, severe violations of religious freedom threaten the stability and security of nations and regions," USCIRF said. "The freedom to follow one's conscience in matters of religion or belief is essential to human dignity and human flourishing."

The list of CPCs recommendations in 2018 are to Central African Republic (CAR), Nigeria, Pakistan, Russia, Syria, and Vietnam, in addition to 10 countries the U.S. Congress so

designated in December 2017: Burma, China, Eritrea, Iran, North Korea, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.

USCIRF recommends 12 countries for a U.S. 2018 watch list: Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Cuba, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Laos, Malaysia, and Turkey.

The Islamic State (also known as ISIS) in Iraq and Syria, the Taliban in Afghanistan, and al-Shabaab in Somalia are listed as EPCs.

Acts of persecution noted in the USCIRF report include the unjust imprisonment of American pastor Andrew Brunson in Turkey; a genocidal campaign waged by ISIS against Christians, Yazidis, and Shi'a Muslims in Iraq and Syria; the Nigerian government's failure to prevent or punish religion-based violence involving Boko Haram and Fulani herdsmen; Pakistan's blasphemy laws and increased extremist activity against minority religious communities including Christians and others; and Russian bans on Jehovah's Witnesses along with accusing peaceful religious groups of extremism.

The full report is accessible at uscirf.gov/reports-briefs/annual-report/2018-annual-report.

Revivals & Homecomings

► **South Nettleton Church, Nettleton:** Homecoming, June 3; service, 11 a.m., followed by covered dish lunch and afternoon singing with Masters Quartet; Bryan Burge, speaker.

► **Calvary Church, Summit:** Homecoming, June 3; coffee and fellowship, 10 a.m.; memorial, 10:30 a.m.; worship, 11 a.m., followed by dinner; Jeremy Greer, speaker; Mike Burns, pastor.

► **Center Hill Church, Hamilton:** Memorial, decoration, homecoming service, June 3; Sunday School, 9 a.m.; worship and memorial service, 10 a.m., followed by covered dish meal (no nut products); Terry J.

Edwards, pastor.

► **Liberty Church, Carroll County:** Homecoming, June 3; service, 10:45 a.m., followed by meal; Dennis McKay, speaker; Gary Tanner, pastor.

► **Coila Church, Coila:** Homecoming, June 3; service, 11 a.m., followed by lunch and singing featuring Dayna Clunan, Taylor Everett, and Promised Quartet; Lanny Haley, speaker; Terry Corley, pastor.

► **County Line Church, Attala Association:** Revival, June 3 - 6; Sun., 11 a.m. and 6 p.m.; Mon. - Wed., 7 p.m.; Don Cook, speaker; Mike Barker, music; Allen Peoples, pastor.

MS POSITIONS

INDIAN SPRINGS BAPTIST CHURCH IN LAUREL, MS IS SEEKING A FULL TIME ASSOCIATE PASTOR AND WORSHIP LEADER AND A FULL TIME ASSOCIATE PASTOR AND STUDENTS. Send resumes to the Personnel Committee, Indian Springs Baptist Church, 500 Indian Springs Church Road, Laurel, MS 39443.

UNITY BAPTIST CHURCH, MOSELLE, MS IS ACCEPTING RESUMES FOR A FULL-TIME PASTOR. Please mail resumes to Unity Baptist Church, P.O. Box 156, Moselle, MS 39459. Or you may email them to ubc_resumes@yahoo.com. Either should be designated as Attention: Pastor Search Committee.

DREW BAPTIST CHURCH IS SEEKING A BI-VOCATIONAL PASTOR— Please email resume to drewbaptistchurch@gmail.com or U.S. mail to Drew Baptist Church, 139 S Church St., Drew, MS 38737.

EASTWOOD BAPTIST CHURCH OF INDIANOLA IS RECEIVING RESUMES FOR A PART-TIME MINISTER OF MUSIC. Resumes may be emailed to willebelts2971@gmail.com or mailed to Eastwood Baptist Church P.O. Box 466 Indianola, MS 38751 ATTN: Music Search Committee.

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF LAUREL, MS IS SEEKING AN EXPERIENCED, FULL-TIME YOUTH MINISTER. Send Resumes to nbstally@comcast.net or Nancy Billingsley at 20 Tallahoma West Laurel, MS 39440. For more information, visit the church website at <http://fbclaurel.org/youth-ministry/>

SEEKING A FULL-TIME PASTOR - BETHANY BAPTIST CHURCH. Located at Meridian, MS in the Whynot community of Southern Lauderdale County. Please email resume to office@whynotbethany.org or mail to Bethany Baptist Church, 4475 Ponds Road, Meridian, MS 39301.

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PULPIT SUPPLY AVAILABLE: Retired Southern Baptist Navy chaplain available for Sunday pulpit supply on short notice (pastor illness, vacation, rest, etc.). 100 mile radius of Hattiesburg. Deacon of Hardy Street Baptist Church. Graduate of New Orleans Baptist and Fuller Theological Seminaries. References available. Compensation unimportant. Contact him at 601-408-4608 or bennythornsbys.com

Florida city fighting to keep cross in public park

PENSACOLA, FL. (BP and local reports) — In a two-year legal battle pitting the City of Pensacola, FL., against secular humanists and self-proclaimed "nontheists," the fate of a 77-year-old cross in public park hangs in the balance as city officials appeal a federal court order that the monument be torn down because it represents a government endorsement of religion.

Pensacola presented its case May 16 to a three-judge panel of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit in Atlanta.

"Religious symbols aren't like graffiti that the government should erase as soon as someone complains," attorney Luke Goodrich said in a press release after the court hearing. "The Constitution allows the government to recognize the significant role of religion in our nation's history and culture."

Goodrich is vice president and senior counsel at the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty in Washington, D.C., which is representing the City of Pensacola against the American Humanist Association, also in Washington, D.C., and the Freedom from Religion Foundation in Madison, WI.

The plaintiffs prevailed in a lower court last year when U.S. District Judge Roger Vinson, a

1983 appointee of U.S. President Ronald Reagan, ruled the 34-foot Latin cross violates the Establishment Clause of the U.S. Constitution.

The city contends the cross has stood in Pensacola's 28-acre Bayview Park since 1941 without complaint as a World War II monument donated by a local community service group.

"Pensacola is proud of the pivotal role it has played in American history," Pensacola Mayor Ashton Hayward said in the Becket press release, "and we should be free to celebrate that history."

The plaintiffs lack standing in the case, Becket has said, and the city has a constitutional right to preserve the cross in its current location.

"This Court has never found standing to challenge a religious display unless plaintiffs incurred costs to avoid the display or could not avoid it during normal interactions with the government," Becket said in a court brief defending the city. "Plaintiffs admit that neither circumstance is present here. Thus, they lack standing."

At least two of the people the plaintiffs represent live in Canada and a third one lives outside the city, Becket has noted. Only the fourth person represented by the plaintiffs lives in Pensacola, Becket said, and



HAYWARD



GOODRICH



Bayview Park, Pensacola

that person uses a cross "for his own satanic purposes."

The cross is one of more than 170 displays the city considers to be commemorations of Pensacola's history and culture. "Far from endorsing Christianity, the cross memorializes how Pensacolians came together during World War II and acknowledges 'the

role of religion in American life,'" Becket said, referencing legal precedent.

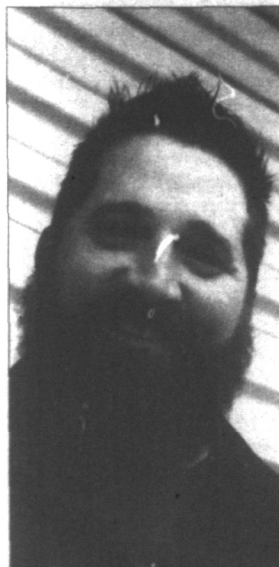
Many organizations and 14 state governments have filed court briefs in support of Pensacola.

Among them are a collection of Jewish groups including Jews for Religious Liberty, the Coalition for Jewish

Values, and Agudath Israel of America.

Joining Florida in filing friend of the court briefs are Alabama, Georgia, Indiana, Kansas, Louisiana, Missouri, Nebraska, Nevada, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Carolina, and Utah.

A court ruling is expected this summer, Becket said.



Dave Glander was formerly a devout Atheist prior to experiencing a radical encounter with Jesus Christ.

He is a copastor at The WAY in Hoschton, GA and the founder of Truth Ministries, an apologetics-based ministry headquartered in Atlanta, GA. He is the owner and curator for the Museum of Truth, which is an 1800 square foot traveling Biblical Museum. Dave is also an expert on the Shroud of Turin and travels with one of only five life-sized Shroud of Turin displays in the world. Dave will be bringing a replica of the Shroud of Turin and speaking on the resurrection of Christ.

WHEELER GROVE BAPTIST CHURCH
JUNE 10TH • 6:30PM

For more information:
21 County Road 519 Corinth, MS 38834 (662) 287-2864

SBC

cont. from p. 1

Committee representatives to meet with him and another DCBC representative May 7 for what Cochran termed "negotiations" about the EC's February decision, Boto said.

Despite the Executive Committee's offer to send representatives to Washington for such a meeting, the gathering did not materialize and Cochran offered to meet via conference call instead.

"In my reply," Boto said, "I indicated that the long window (almost one and one-half years) during which the DCBC had failed to address our concerns...

gave me little hope that a conference call at this late date would be helpful if it did not include those with authority to exclude the errant church from the DCBC's fellowship by May 20.

"I encouraged him rather to work with his leaders to show doctrinal kinship with the SBC by calling the church to repent or face removal from the DCBC fellowship, something we would find as an affirmation of the convention's commitment to biblical truth."

At its February meeting, the Executive Committee "expressed deep regret over the need to take this action, but felt compelled to affirm biblical truth over organizational relationships," Boto said.

GRAHAM

cont. from p. 2

marriage to Ruth Bell Graham, and love for their five children.

"From the beginning of our marriage, we determined that we would be tithers," wrote Graham of Ruth's and his financial commitment to God's kingdom. "We determined not to be preoccupied with material things, which leads to covetousness and which the Scriptures call idolatry."

In keeping with his commitment on earth, Graham willed 10% of his residuary estate — that which is left after debts, funeral expenses, death taxes, and all other claims are satisfied — to the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association (BGEA) "to be used for the purposes of the Billy Graham Library Endowment."

After the posthumous BGEA contribution, all remaining assets will be distributed equally among his five children: daughters Virginia Graham, Anne Graham Lotz, Ruth Graham, and sons Franklin Graham, and Nelson Graham.

Another beneficiary included in Graham's will is his literary trust, which will hold the copyrights to his works.

Vacation Bible School

► Union Seminary Church, Laurel: June 4 - 8, 6 - 8:30 p.m., for kindergarten - 6th grade.

► Hickory Grove Church, Lamar: June 3 - 7, 6 - 8:30 p.m.; pre-K - 6th grade.

► Rocky Point Church, Leake Association: June 4 - 8, 9 a.m. - noon; Lite Moore, director.

PATTERSON

cont. from p. 1

role and shifted immediately to president emeritus. He was also named theologian-in-residence with compensation and a house on campus.

Jeffrey Bingham, dean of Southwestern's School of Theology, was appointed interim president.

Trustees adopted a motion stating "evidence exists" that Patterson had complied with reporting laws on assault and abuse, and said they found "no evidence of misconduct" in the employment file of Nathan Montgomery, a Southwestern student who was fired from his employment on campus dining services after he tweeted an article critical of Patterson.

The trustees announced their decisions at 3:09 a.m. after more than 13 hours of executive session. Patterson appeared to be present with trustees for just over two and a half hours of the executive session.

Patterson released a statement May 23 to Baptist Press in response to the trustee's decision.

"The Lord gives, and the Lord takes away. Blessed be the name of the Lord," he said quoting from Job 1:20. "I am grateful for our Southern Baptist churches, their love and their prayers. The future of Southwestern Seminary is bright. The best days lie ahead. God is gracious to the Pattersons. We will exit this world someday still witnessing to the lost about our amazing Savior."

As the trustees met, The Washington Post published a report claiming Patterson told a student at Southeastern Seminary in 2003 not to report an alleged rape to the police. He was Southeastern's president at the time, moving to Southwestern Seminary later that year. Southeastern Seminary is located in Wake Forest, N.C.



SPECIAL CALLED MEETING — Southwestern Seminary trustees settle in for a special called meeting May 22 on the seminary's Fort Worth campus that resulted in the dismissal of seminary president Paige Patterson for remarks he had made over the years about women, domestic violence, and the physical appearance of a teenage girl. (Photo courtesy of Southwestern Seminary)

Current Southeastern President Danny Akin sent an e-mail to Southeastern students on the evening of May 22 stating he was only recently made aware of the alleged rape, has consulted with law enforcement, and is committed to "a zero-tolerance policy on campus regarding rape."

Southwestern's trustees convened their meeting in response to controversy surrounding Patterson since late April over statements he has made through the years on women, domestic violence, and a teenage girl's physical appearance.

In an audio clip from 2000, Patterson expressed his views regarding domestic violence, stating the proper response of a wife to domestic abuse "depends on the level of abuse to some degree."

Patterson has also said in the past that he was gratified when an abused wife took his advice to stay with her violent husband and subsequently showed up at church with two black eyes, because the incident ultimately resulted in a profession of faith on the husband's part.

Patterson has not provided documentation of when and where the incident took place.

In an online video of a 2014 sermon, he illustrated the Hebrew word used to describe Eve's being "built" from Adam's rib in Genesis 2:22 by quoting a teenage boy's assessment that a teen girl was "built." Patterson added that the girl's appearance was "nice."

Patterson issued a statement May 10, in which he apologized for a "failure to be as thoughtful... as I should have been" in describing domestic violence and the physical attractiveness of women in sermon illustrations.

While the years-old video and audio clips were moving through social media channels, thousands of Southern Baptists signed open letters both supporting and opposing Patterson.

As the Southwestern trustees deliberated, Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee interim president D. August Boto said in a statement, "In the Southern Baptist world, entity governance is a matter of trustee involvement and determination."

Entity leaders are directly responsible to their boards.

Baptists have long thought that the best outcomes are derived through the priesthood of the believers, committee and trustee deliberations involving many Christians, and a breadth of inclusion. Group deliberations are cumbersome, difficult and frustrating, but they seem to produce more maturity, more patience, more accountability, and more sense of a family wherein love abounds.

"What is going on at Southwestern Seminary is that sort of process. I trust our system, but I trust Christ more. I know He is there, and cares. I know what His Word says in Romans 8:26-28. Therefore, I have confidence that what has been decided will work out for the betterment of the seminary, for the Pattersons, and for our convention if, as I trust, the trustees have been driven by a deep desire to fulfill God's calling and accomplish God's purpose."

In response to The Post's report about Patterson at Southeastern Seminary, Akin said in his e-mail that the alleged rape "took place under a previous administration. I was only recently made aware of this event."

"Since being made aware of the event, I have asked our General Counsel to review the actions

taken by the previous administration, and we have consulted with law enforcement. I have also spoken with the former student who has brought the accusation to make sure I have an understanding of the events, and to let her know of our love for her."

"While this happened 15 years ago under a previous administration, I want to make sure the campus knows that we have a zero-tolerance policy on campus regarding rape, sexual harassment, abuse, etc."

"If you ever are the victim of any of these, I want to encourage you to immediately report what has happened to the authorities in addition to working with our Student Life division to receive care and counseling."

Patterson is scheduled to deliver the convention sermon next month at the Southern Baptist Convention's meeting in Dallas.

Southern Baptist Convention President Steve Gaines, senior pastor of Bellevue Church in suburban Memphis, has noted the only two ways that commitment can be changed are if Patterson voluntarily withdraws from preaching or if messengers vote to replace him with alternate convention preacher Kie Bowman, a Southwestern trustee who was present at the May 22-23 meeting.

Submission Guidelines

The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention. News items and/or photographs depicting benefits and activities for secular or outside organizations will not be published.

Preferred method: news may be submitted electronically to the e-mail address below, and must be included in the message segment of an e-mail form. Secondary method: news may be typewritten or neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper and mailed. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone. Due to ever-present virus threats, no text attachments will be accepted. Photograph attachments in JPEG format are permissible.

Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

Photographs must be submitted electronically via e-mail, as attachments in JPEG format. **Hard copy photographs mailed through the postal service will not be accepted.** Photographs must be clear, sharp, and well-lit. Photographs must depict people. No landscape, building, or object-only photographs will be printed. Photographs containing inappropriate gestures and objectionable clothing will not be published. Cell phone photographs and other low resolution items that do not reproduce well on newsprint are generally not publishable.

There is no guarantee that news items and/or photographs will be published, and unsolicited material will not be acknowledged or returned. All news items are subject to editing, and all photographs are subject to cropping. News items and/or photographs can be published one time only. Deadline for submitting news is one week prior to requested publication date. Articles that are not date-sensitive will be published on a space-available basis. These guidelines are not meant to be exhaustive.

Submit news to The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. FAX: (601) 292-3330. E-mail: baptistrecord@mbcb.org

Truth is not relative.

Find it in the One who is the way, truth, and life.

Simply share the following prayer with God in your own words:

1. Lord, I admit that I need you. (I have sinned.)
2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. (I repent.)
3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. (I believe in Jesus.)
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life.

From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with Him. (I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

"But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name." (John 1:12)

If you make a decision for Christ today, contact a local Southern Baptist church for spiritual guidance.

Respected • 2 Samuel 1:22-27; 2:1-7

David, a man after God's own heart, will be the center of our Bible study this summer. The Biblical material that we will explore for this study is the book of 2 Samuel. We do not know who wrote the book or the exact time it was written. Our leaders guide in its introduction to 2 Samuel suggests it is "possible that it was written right after David died." My identification of David as "a man after God's own heart" is based on 1 Samuel 13:14.

To understand the Holy Spirit's teachings through the book of 2 Samuel we need to try to understand what the Biblical writer was telling us about David when he said "a man after God's own heart." There is a major clue for us when we read: "In the course of time, David inquired of the LORD. 'Shall I go up to one of the towns of Judah?'" 2 Samuel 2:1a (NIV). David's question shows that he does expect a clear and specific answer from God.

The urgency of David's prayer is the result of the pressing situation where he finds himself. His King and his good friend, Jonathan, have just been killed. David begins to realize the gravity of the situation when he remembers that he was anointed the next king of Israel. Very few people knew that, so he needs God's help and direction on what to do next. Fear was not slowing David

down.

Remember, as a young shepherd boy, David had killed a lion and a bear to protect his father's sheep. Then, while still a young lad, he had a face off with Goliath and killed him with a sling shot and small smooth stones. When the Philistine giant taunted the lad David, listen to David's answer:

"You come against me with sword and spear and Javelin, but I come against you in the name of the LORD Almighty,

the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the LORD will hand you over to me," 1 Samuel 17:45-46 (NIV).

The vibrant, active faith in David's answer to Goliath gives us more information on the meaning of the writer of 1 Samuel's description of King David as a man after God's own heart. We do need to take note of the Bible's total candor in describing the Bible's leading characters. David was not perfect without sin. You probably remember David's adulterous, shameful affair with Bath-

sheba. Which sin he also compounded by murdering her husband, Uriah, to cover up his ungodly sin.

The last half of David's 40 year reign as King of Israel was damaged by this indiscretion and its terrible toll on his family. We will see in more detail these events as we come to them later in our study of 2 Samuel this quarter. For now let's return to our focal passage for this first lesson. When David asks God in the first verse of chapter 2 "Where shall I go?"

God answered very clearly and very specifically "To Hebron."

"Then the men of Judah came to Hebron and there they

anointed David King over the house of Judah," 2 Samuel 2:4 (NIV). David's first act as the anointed King of Judah was to recognize a great act of kindness to his predecessor, King Saul, the last anointed King, 2 Samuel 2:4-6 (NIV):

"When David was told that it was the men of Jabesh Gilead who had buried Saul, he sent messengers to say to them, 'The LORD bless you for show-

ing this kindness to Saul your master by burying him. May the LORD now show you kindness and faithfulness, and I too will show you the same favor because you have done this.'"

David was very committed to showing and encouraging others to show proper respect for Saul because he was God's anointed King. The recognition of men of Jabesh Gilead was an indication of David's commitment to showing and requiring respect. In the opening verses of 2 Samuel David had the man who claimed he killed Saul executed for that crime. This is David's exclamation, "Why were you not afraid to lift your hand to destroy the LORD's anointed?" 2 Samuel 1:14 (NIV).

These historical accounts we are exploring this summer have timely information for us in the summer of 2018. As I write about this first lesson the news on my phone and TV show workmen in Jerusalem putting up new traffic signs showing the way to the United States Embassy in Jerusalem. As we explore the biblical material on King David's reign, we will study the way God lead David to make Jerusalem the capital of Israel.

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Explore the Bible

with Don Hicks

Why Are We Even Here? • Genesis 1:1-5, 26-31

Genesis 1:1-5. God is the Creator.

We live in a culture of busy schedules. We are constantly bombarded by information - Facebook, texting, cable, Twitter, emails. As Christians we can become so caught up in "keeping up" that we forget "why we are even here." When my son was 4 years old, as I tied his shoes so that we could rush out the door, he asked, "Why are we always in a hurry?"

Why are we always in a hurry? Where did we come from? Why are we even here?

Genesis 1:1-5 states that God created everything on the earth before he created man. And God states repeatedly that everything He made was good and created to "...Be fruitful and multiply..." Genesis 1:23 (NLT)

Genesis 1:26-31. We were created in God's image.

Genesis 1:26-31 reveals that God, not only created us, but He created us in His image! We are the only creation that has that distinction - not one of the animals or plants. These Scriptures state that He created us in His image to "...Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and govern it..." Genesis 1:28 (NLT)

In studying the whole of scripture, we must conclude that God created us

to be in relationship with Himself. He loved us and created us with abilities that would make a relationship with Himself a choice. He does not coerce us or demand that we love him. He gives us the choice - just as he did Adam and Eve (Genesis 3) - the choice to accept him and walk in relationship with him or reject him and live life separate from him.

"In the beginning the Word already existed. The Word was with God, and the Word was God... God created everything through him, and nothing was created except through him. The Word gave life to everything that was created." John 1:1-4 (NLT) This chapter of John further explains that Jesus came to reveal God to us (John 1:18). When Philip asked Jesus to reveal the Father, Jesus replied, "...Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father!" (John 14:9 NLT)

Jesus wasn't created; He is the Creator. God the Son came to reveal the father and to sacrifice Himself (Jesus) so that we might, not only have a rela-

tionship with Him here, but in eternity. John 14: asserts that Jesus is the only way to God. John 15:14-16 assures us that we have been chosen by Jesus to be His friends. This passage further states that Jesus has appointed us "...to go and produce lasting fruit..." John 15:16 (NLT).

In John 14, Jesus promises the Holy Spirit will live in those who choose to repent of their sins and accept Jesus as their savior and lord. The Holy Spirit

produces spiritual fruit in Jesus' followers: love, joy, peace, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and

self-control. Galatians 5:22-23 (NLT) As we search the scriptures, we find that God possesses these characteristics. God's love for mankind is exhibited and extolled throughout the Scriptures, but especially as He sends his only son to die for our sins that He might have a relationship with us (John 3:16). In several scriptures we find that God delights in us (Psalm 18:19; 37:23; Proverbs 11:20, etc.) - joy; God's patience

and faithfulness with His creation is evidenced in almost every scriptural account. Some examples are the Israelites as they travel from Egypt through the closing of the Old Testament, Joseph, David, Peter, and the woman at the well (John 4). God created us in His image, with His characteristics, so that we might have a relationship with Him.

Why are we even here? We were created to live in a close relationship with our Creator and His Son, Jesus Christ. As we walk in that relationship, we imitate our loving Father and His Son to a lost and dying world. We portray the life of Jesus as we show love to the unlovable and to one another. We encourage the lost and the saved to find joy and peace as we walk through trials and tribulations with confidence and the ability to live above our circumstances.

Why are we even here? To live an abundant life in fellowship with the Creator.

"I (Jesus) have come so that they may have life and have it in abundance." John 10:10 (NASB)

"...My (Jesus') purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life." John 10:10 (NLT)

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Bible Studies for Life

with Lisa Bannister

First Person: Come pray with us at SBC annual meet

By Ted Elmore
Correspondent

"Daddy, are we there yet?" Oh, do I remember those days.

A few of you coming to the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) annual meeting in Dallas this year will hear those or similar words. Many of us recall the days when vacations were planned around the Southern Baptist Convention.

We really do stand out in the crowds as "tourists." No matter how cool you are, or how skinny your jeans are, or how long that broom skirt really is, folks, you are a tourist, and you will stand out in the crowd. Even locals will stand out. Those lanyards around our necks say it all,

but that's not really a bad thing.

We will see old friends, make new ones, and hang out with the tribe for a few days of refreshing. No, outsiders won't understand us, not even in the Bible Belt. The last time the SBC met in Dallas, the local newspaper used the old line to describe us: "Southern Baptists came to town with \$10 and the Ten Commandments and didn't break either one!"

My wife Cheryl and I drove around Dallas in 1974 for our first SBC, gawking at the enormity of the city. We registered and walked through the halls. I never saw such big hair in all my life! Some preachers looked like rock stars — of the '50s! I thought Pat Boone had been cloned, but we were there. It was our tribe and

we were beaming with pride and anticipation. I saw pastors that my pastors had quoted. I was actually in the same room with them. Our hearts were full and our dreams were big.

Now we come together in 2018 in a different world. We, who Jesus said were to be salt and light, have seen the tasteless and at times walked in the dark. Billy Graham is gone, and no one has replaced him. That is not pessimism; that is reality. It is a good reality because in that reality, or maybe maturity, I have learned what Harold Lindsell once said, "Only God can turn the water to wine."

Although the world is tasteless and dark, we are children of the Light. And in that Light, we see light. One of the bright lights

at the 2018 SBC annual meeting will be the prayer room. I am inviting you to come pray there for 15 minutes as often as you want.

God can do in a minute "exceedingly, abundantly above all that we ask or think" (Ephesians 3:20) if His people will call upon Him.

It is our desire for God to use our denomination for His glory. In this desire, the convention has a prayer room led by local prayer leaders. Our prayer room this year will be an exciting journey of prayer, from connecting prayer in the home and church to taking the Gospel to the ends of the earth.

We are asking people to volunteer for one or more 15-minute prayer segments as we seek to cover the Pastors' Confer-

ence and the annual meeting with prayer.

Will you pray 15 minutes? You may register to pray during all of the segments you desire at sbtexas.com/prayer. It does not matter how many people are in the segment. Pray when you can. Registration helps the prayer team prepare for you.

I look forward to seeing you in Dallas and I hope you will use your social media platform to promote the link to the prayer room registration. Safe journey! Yes, kids, we are nearly there.

Elmore is pastor/church relations associate and prayer strategist for the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention in Dallas. His commentary appears here courtesy of Baptist Press.

LifeWay stores to distribute free Bibles in summer initiative

NASHVILLE (BP) — This summer, thousands of Bibles will ring up for free at the registers of LifeWay Christian Stores of the Southern Baptist Convention in Nashville.

It's an effort by LifeWay to help local churches take the Word of God into their communities through an initiative called, Share the Word. Together.

Churches of any denomination within 15 miles of a LifeWay store can sign up for a designated week in which each member of the church can visit the local LifeWay to pick up a free CSB-translation personal gift Bible. Church members will then give the Bibles away in their communities.

"The goal for this free Bible giveaway is to start Gospel conversations and spark invitations to weekend worship services or Bible study," said LifeWay President and CEO Thom S. Rainer.

Rainer shared on his blog this week that he was inspired to create this initiative when his church gave away loaves of bread to members and asked them to share the bread with people in their communities. He says many who received the bread came to church the next Sunday.

"I began to think, 'Could I leverage my position at LifeWay to help thousands of churches do the same?'" Rainer said. "The answer came back as a resounding, 'Yes!' We will be giving away the Bread of Life instead of the bread in loaves."

Along with the free Bibles, LifeWay stores will provide instructions for church members who participate in this Bible outreach ministry along with bulletin inserts, graphics, logos, email templates, and sample announcement scripts to churches.

Rainer said one pastor asked him how LifeWay could afford to give away so many Bibles. "I simply told him I was trusting God to provide. I have little doubt God will honor a ministry that gets His Word into the community and provides opportunities for powerful Gospel conversations."

Churches are encouraged to sign up for a week that overlaps with an existing event on their church calendar, such as Vacation Bible School, Promotion Sunday, or back-to-school kickoff events.

Spanish Bibles will also be available for use on a limited basis for churches that designate "Spanish" in the denomination field when filling out the form.



NO TO REGULATION — Homeschool families line the halls of the California Capitol in Sacramento to signal their opposition to legislative bills that would force state regulations on the large homeschool community, including criminal background checks on parents who choose homeschooling for their children. (Photo courtesy of California Family Council)

California homeschoolers voice opposition, school state's Assembly

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (BP and local reports) — California homeschoolers converged on the state Capitol in early May to voice opposition to a bill that would require state officials to collect and make public a list of families that educate their children at home.

After listening to three hours of testimony, no member of the Assembly Education Committee wanted to go on record supporting the measure by making a motion for a vote, effectively killing the bill. The California State Assembly is the lower house of the California Legislature, and is the equivalent to the Mississippi House of Representatives.

Brad Dacus, president of the Pacific Justice Institute based in Sacramento, called the bill's defeat a victory well

worth celebrating, especially in a state known for its regulatory penchant over every aspect of its citizens' lives.

"All is not lost in California," he said. "When we stand together, we can still make a difference."

Assemblyman Jose Medina, a Democrat from Riverside, proposed the legislation after a high-profile child abuse case in Riverside. He initially wanted to require local fire officials to inspect every registered home school but dropped that provision after fire departments protested the additional workload.

Medina continued to insist, even during last week's hearing, that homeschoolers need better oversight.

"What we saw tonight was a massive victory for homeschool families, parental

rights, and government by consent of the people," said Jonathan Keller, president of California Family Council. "Thanks to the thousands of homeschool families and supporters who flooded the Capitol, legislators were reminded that this building is still the people's house."

California homeschoolers defeated another regulatory proposal earlier in April that would have required parents to get teaching certificates.

Meanwhile, lawmakers in Hawaii also attempted to adopt new homeschool oversight provisions earlier this year, proposing mandatory background checks for all homeschool parents. That bill died in committee after the homeschool community rallied to oppose it.

